

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4024

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 04737

EYES ONLY FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHRONTZ

EYES ONLY FOR BIEGEL (EUR/WE)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, BE

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT

1. LEWIS AND GRAY MET WITH VANDEN BOEYNANTS AND TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF FABRIQUE NATIONALE THE EVENING OF MAY 28. LEWIS HAS GIVEN US A FULL ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED. WE ARE SENDING IT TO YOU TO SUPPLEMENT GRAY'S GUARDED REPORT BY TELEPHONE. LEWIS STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF LIMITING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS MEETING ONLY TO THOSE WHO ABSOLUTELY MUST KNOW.

2. VANDEN BOEYNANTS WAS INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THE F-16 PROGRAM FOR THE EUROPEANS AND IN SAFEGUARDING PRODUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE FRENCH SPEAKING PART OF BELGIUM. HE RAISED FOUR SPECIFIC MATTERS WITH LEWIS AND GRAY AND APPARENTLY WILL RAISE AT LEAST THE FIRST THREE WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER WHEN VANDEN BOEYNANTS MEETS HIM ON MAY 29.

A. VANDEN BOEYNANTS WANTS TO BE REASSURED THAT BELGIUM WILL BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PRODUCTION OF ANY F-16 AIRCRAFT THE US MAY BUY OVER AND BEYOND 650. HE ALSO WANTS A GUARANTEE THAT THE PRICE OF THE F-16 TO THE EUROPEANS WILL NOT BE INCREASED IF THE US SHOULD BUY LESS THAN 650.

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B. VANDEN BOEYNANTS CONSIDERS IT IMPORTANT THAT ALL OF

THE F-16 TECHNOLOGY (EXCEPT PARTS OF THE RADAR) BE PASSED ON TO BELGIAN INDUSTRY.

C. VANDEN BOEYNANTS IS CONCERNED THAT THE US COULD DECIDE TO CHANGE THE PROGRAM OR THE CONFIGURATION OF THE AIRCRAFT BY UNILATERAL DECISION. TO HELP PROTECT THE EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS, VANDEN BOEYNANTS PROPOSES THAT THE US AGREE TO ABSORB THE COST OF CHANGES INSISTED ON BY THE US AND OPPOSED BY THE EUROPEANS.

D. VANDEN BOEYNANTS SAID THAT THE FRENCH HAVE THREATENED TO CANCEL SUBSTANTIAL ORDERS WITH FABRIQUE NATIONALE IF BELGIUM BUYS THE F-16. HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT COULD BE DONE TO OFFSET THE LOSS OF THIS FRENCH BUSINESS AND TO MAINTAIN PRODUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE FRENCH SPEAKING PART OF BELGIUM. VANDEN BOEYNANTS DID NOT MENTION THE M-58, ALTHOUGH THE REPRESENTATIONS OF FABRIQUE NATIONALE HAD EARLIER IN THE DAY IN A SEPARATE MEETING WITH LEWIS AND GRAY. VANDEN BOEYNANTS WAS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEXT TWO YEARS BEFORE THE F-16 PROGRAM IS IN FULL SWING. GRAY INDICATED THAT PRATT AND WHITNEY COULD SHIFT PRODUCTION OF SOME MILITARY AND SOME CIVILIAN ENGINES TO INCREASE FABRIQUE NATIONALE'S PRODUCTION IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE F-16. BOTH FABRIQUE NATIONALE AND VANDEN BOEYNANTS APPEARED TO BE SATISFIED.

3. LEWIS REQUESTS THAT SECRETARY SCHLESINGER NOT INDICATE TO VANDEN BOEYNANTS THAT HE HAD ADVANCE INDICATION OF THESE TOPICS.

4. FROM LEWIS' ACCOUNT AND THE INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM A SENIOR BELGIAN GOVERNMENT SOURCE (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY), IT APPEARS THAT VANDEN BOEYNANTS IS ENGAGED IN A LAST MINUTE FACE SAVING EFFORT. IF HE COULD POINT TO SOME ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS HE NEGOTIATED, IT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR HIM POLITICALLY TO GO ALONG WITH THE PURCHASE OF THE F-16. FIRESTONE

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